

Wyoming Department of Agriculture

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The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.



Dave Freudenthal, Governor
Jason Fearnelyhough, Director

July 1, 2009

Paul Willard, ID Team Leader
Brush Creek / Hayden Ranger District
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests
Thunder Basin National Grassland
Highway 130
P.O. Box 249
Saratoga, WY 82331

Dear Mr. Willard:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Scoping Notice to prepare a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document for the proposed implementation of Phase I of the Snowy Range Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMA).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposed project has the potential to affect our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, it's important you inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

It is our understanding the CMA is proposing to implement the following activities:

- Replace Centennial Visitor Information Center with new facility
- Improve Brush Creek visitor information site
- Improve Hanging Lake pullout (WYDOT ROW)
- Develop off-highway parking lot in the vicinity of Green Rock over flow parking
- Expand accessible fishing access at Barber Lake
- Improve and pave parking area at the Sucker Lake turn-off (WYDOT ROW)
- Improve Towner Lake Road
- Pave first ½ mile of Sand Lake Road.

The details in the scoping document are vague and fail to mention potential impacts to agricultural producers or to natural resources located in the area. However, with the Snowy Range Scenic Byway Corridor being approximately 4-miles wide, the WDA believes there is a potential for impacts to these resources within the project area. If any of the proposed projects has the potential to impact permittees, livestock grazing operations or natural resources, please analyze the following:

- increased off- and on-road traffic
- increased number of vehicles in the area causing death or impairments of livestock
- damage to fences, cattle guards and range improvements
- decreased Animal Unit Months and pastures for grazing
- decreased palatability of vegetation and forage from road dust and development activities

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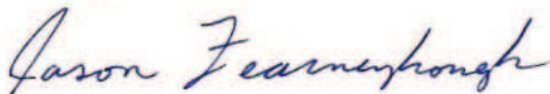
- introduction and spread of noxious weeds
- timely and successful reclamation and mitigation of disturbed surface areas
- social and economic impacts to agriculture producers in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Congressional mandates, federal statutes, and implementing regulations call for multiple use, and should be an integral part of the assessments. Moreover, the NEPA document should evaluate the impact of this project upon the intent expressed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to manage public lands in a manner to provide food and habitat for fish, wildlife, and domestic animals. The consequence of the proposed project upon food and habitat for domestic animals deserves the same degree of study and documentation.

Decisions in the document should allow forest service staff and livestock grazing permittees the opportunity to work cooperatively. The WDA requests flexibility forest service staff to make the best site-specific, case-by-case decisions that are in the best interests of the affected resources and citizens throughout the life of this project.

In conclusion, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Scoping Notice for the proposed project. We encourage continued attention to our concerns and we look forward to hearing about and being involved in proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,



Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JE/cw

CC: Governor's Planning Office
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts